# The Black Cat

## "The Sheik's Riddle"

July 1905

The Sheik's Riddle.
John Reed.

By the Hands of His Friends.
Ben Hur Lampman.

Triumphant Aunt Nancy.
Anna Rachel Southworth.

In the Great Shadow.
W. L. Lockwood.

The Yellow Princess.
Charles Hanford.

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5 CENTS

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## The Sheik's Riddle.*

BY JOHN EARL.

WALKING homeward on that windy night, with clouds drifting across the stars, I carried with me, feeling for it an odd sort of hatred, probably the strangest legacy that had ever fallen to a man. My aunt, who had just died, and the passing of whose soul seemed to my fancy in some way related to the dark, hurrying rifts above me, had called me to her bedside late that afternoon. It was seldom that I had seen a more withered face than the one on which I had looked down on the pillow. I remembered her, from my young days, as a silent, unsympathetic woman, repellent to a child. I had known her, in later years, as a recluse, a spinster living in solitary state in her sombre house, whose one passion — its and hers — seemed to have been for collecting curious things. They had all, from the Bible that had belonged to a Scottish martyr, its yellow leaves covered with age's unlovely dark brown patches, to the many musty souvenirs of cities, battlefields, and cruises over foreign seas, been disposed of in her will, — all except the box which her shaking hand had drawn, wrapped in a handkerchief, from beneath the bedclothes when we were alone together, and which I then carried in my coat.

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She had explained her possession of it briefly, as her time was short. The reason for her giving it to me I was not to know; the words with which she would have told me died in her throat. I was left to wonder why she called me to her. There had been no love lost between us. Whether she did not wish the mysterious casket to fall into the hands of strangers who might make a mock of her secreting it, or had a grim desire that it might trouble me as it had troubled her, she was gone beyond the reach of question. My eyes involuntarily sought the clouds passing overhead.

I set the box on the table when I reached my rooms, wrapped in the handkerchief as she had given it to me, and stirred the fire and sat down to my pipe, although the usual good cheer failed to put a distance, as I hoped, between me and the atmosphere that I had left. My aunt's face was before me and her hands still seemed to hold the box. It had been given her — to tell what she had told me — by an English sea-captain at his death, one whose name I knew as a family tradition, who had brought it from Arabia, where it had been found. More than this she had not the strength to say.

"Open it," she had adjured me in a whisper — her last words: "I never dared. *He* never dared!"

Unpinning the handkerchief, still with the feeling of revulsion owing to the nature of the thing and the circumstances under which I had received it, and of something of the well man's feeling of contempt, I turned up the light, intending to open the box and make an end of the mystery at once. It was a very curious casket, and I paused to look at it, — dark in color, about the length of my hand and half as wide and deep as it was long, curiously covered with arabesques and made of a metal that I did not know. It was heavy and that which it contained seemed, when I set it down, to give a muffled sound. There was no lock nor clasp. Two bands of the same metal, running around it crosswise and welded with Eastern skill, secured it, which, to allow it to be opened, must be filed. Fastened to the lid by a thong, black with age, slipped under one of the metal bands through a hollow in the graving, was a bit of cracked and twisted parchment, which I spread open with somewhat eager hands. There was writing on

it and I held it underneath my glass. Under the characters in Arabic, so faded as to be almost indiscernible, were the translated words: "This is that which was buried with the sheik Abed Horeb; that which, although he fought against it with utmost hate and loathing, haunted by lifelong horror of it, he was compelled to carry with him to the tomb. With you, the opener, into whose hands this box may fall, it shall be buried too."

There was a small, keen file in a drawer near by, and I went to get it. I set my lips and drew its edge across one of the metal bands. The stuff was very hard. Abed Horeb had guarded his sepulchral secret well. A groove began to grow in the dark surface as I grated back and forth, bearing on more heavily as the temper of that through which I filed demanded, and a fine, bright dust began to settle on the polished surface of the table, its composition probably one of the lost arts. Some impulse, when I had filed the first of the bands half through, made me stop and start to file the other; I refused to acknowledge why I did so. When I had filed the second nearly even with the first, a cinder, falling from the grate with a loud sound, forced me to admit the feeling. I was out of sorts, unstrung. The ugly inscription on the parchment had been working on my nerves. It was but natural, I reasoned in excuse of it, after the experience that I had just come through. After all, I said to myself as I laid down the file, why did I do it then? Night was ahead of me with its dreams. Let me have daylight on the matter and a sound night's sleep to shake off the influence of the evening and the folly of the impression it had made upon me. I set the box on the cabinet, made my preparations for the night, and went to bed.

I was awakened in the morning by a knocking on my door. Rousing myself, I was aware at the same time of a ray from some unusual object striking on my eyes unpleasantly — the sun, through a blind that I had left open, on the metal of the mysterious box. The summons on the door was that of the janitress, who told me that a business client was waiting for me in the reception-room below; and, dressing hastily, I was obliged to abandon my intention of putting an end, by the reassuring light of day, to the riddle of the night before. To be truthful, I was

conscious of a feeling of relief in being supplied with an excuse which made it possible to put it off. I had slept poorly — troubled absurdly by my aunt and that traditionary captain who had bestowed the wretched gift on me, and had waked with an aching head. Throughout the round of duties that engaged me until night saw me again turning homeward, I was unable to keep my mind from straying backward to my room. The discolored handkerchief, the file lying on the table, the metal casket on the cabinet, were the only objects really clearly present to my thoughts. I laughed at, I scorned, the weakness, but found to my discomfort that day had not shaken off the impressions of the night. "This is that" was written over every paper spread before me. I put away the paper-cutter on my desk, annoyed by its persistent gleam. It would be to my shame to say to what an extent the folly wrought upon me. When I let myself in at my door that evening, turning the key sharply in the lock, I said to myself that it was to find out what it was that had been buried with Abed Horeb and was to be buried with me too — the opener of the box. To find out, and to consign it, and its casket, and its memory, and that of the woman who had given it to me, and of the spell that it had cast upon me, to the fire. I said, as I came into the room, that I would do this — and yet I was not surprised that I did not. There was nothing this time to stand between me and my firm resolve. I was called away by no one, and my file was ready to my hand. The grooves on the box, gleaming at me in the firelight, like teeth in its sinister face, invited me to finish up my work, but I put it off awhile. The arguments of the night before, arraigning themselves between the box and me, suggested that they were still as good. Why should I open it at night when morning was so soon to follow? Who could tell what the casket might contain? Morning, I swore, should show it to me. The chimes of the clock in the outer room assured me that it was not far distant. I would open it in the morning if the whole world waited. The matter had gone far enough.

Morning after morning passed me by, and night after night I came back to the casket on my cabinet, without opening it, the fire, glowering on it, causing it to greet me, the first and only object, as I came into the room. It waked me in the morning,

stretching out a finger to touch me on the eyes, — it was my sure and silent company as I sat through the solitary evenings with my pipe. Nothing can describe its influence on my life. I mocked at, I cursed, myself, but with the same result. I could not open it. Day after day I knew that I was thus much further from the accomplishment of my resolve. I locked the file in the drawer at last, and threw away the key. Who among those who knew me — or thought they knew me, presumably a calm, clear-headed man — could have imagined me — could I myself have imagined myself — capable of the things I did? I hid the box a hundred times, only to take it out and put it back in its place upon the shelf. I covered it, to uncover it, making sure that the fire should show it to me when I entered in the evening, and that I should not miss its summons when I woke. I was compelled to see it, and to know that it was there. I came to tremble, to such length had it undone me, lest I should at some time look for it and find it gone. I forbade the charwoman to come in, dreading to have her stir around, fearing lest by an accident it might roll upon the floor and break. I would not have come in and found it broken for the world. No one could have conceived the tortures, the fancies, the self-loathing of that period, in which it was revealed to me by a slow but certain process what I was, a coward — a miserable weakling masking among my fellow-beings as a man — one who had but two for company, my aunt and the craven captain who had owned the cursed keepsake with myself. The dead sheik who had left us his legacy was the master of us three.

I threw open the windows and sat shivering, that I might have the company of the sounds in the street without, and when the sounds died away the company of the clouds and stars. I invited in my friends; I pressed them to stay with me, but one by one they saw that there was something wrong and ceased to come. Their excuses, their averted looks, their embarrassment when we met by chance, their evident anxiety to get away, were proof of what they thought, and yet I knew that I was as yet unclouded in my mind. I was gradually avoided, at length deserted, by all save the box and one other, the woman whom I loved, who had not changed, although she showed that she had seen the change in me.

From her, too, conscience, the only virtue that seemed left to me, persuaded me that I must part. A craven such as I, it said, had forfeited the claim to any woman's love. I was not worthy that she should haunt me, with pale, sweet brow, and clear eyes fixed on me with grave questioning, even in my thoughts. Her image must come no more into the room with softly trailing skirts, and take its place beside the fire. There was another presence there more potent than her own, that would blight her, also, with its evil spell. Her soul must not be made a victim of the box.

What description can portray the charm and peace to me of the room to which I went to find her, after a long absence which, although not understanding, her loyal heart had not misunderstood — the sun shining through the thin white curtains on the plants blooming in the boxes in the windows, the clock ticking its contentment on the mantel, the restfully tinted walls, the welcoming chairs, the atmosphere of all-pervading cheer to which I had no right. I had meant to tell her merely that I was unworthy and to bid her to forget that I had ever come into her life, but her woman's power over me drew from me the secret which I had determined no other human being was to share. She listened without comment, but with something in her face which I did not understand. It seemed to me, as I sat with head bowed on her table in utter self-abasement and despair, having confessed all to her and lingering but for a moment more of her, that bending over me she laughed.

"You are not well," she murmured. "Wait for me here till I come back."

In a moment or two more, returning, with that rustle of gentle skirts that I knew so well in dreams, she held a glass of cordial, soothing and sparkling, to my lips.

"What have you in your other hand?" I asked.

"A file," she said.

I pass over my expostulations, my entreaties, my horror, in my now redoubled love of her, at the thought of having her come into contact with the baleful thing. Together we sought the house in which I had my lodgings, together mounted up the stair, together came into the room, which I found that I had never seen in the mellow light of afternoon. As we entered, our eyes turning

toward one object, the dark casket on the cabinet, now become more dreadful than the sphinx's riddle, she put the file into my hand. Her touch, her presence there beside me, brought back my manhood with an electric flash, transfused, as by a current, the power of her spirit into mine, and I knew myself, at that moment, to be what I had ceased to hope that I should ever be, the master of the box.

Striding forward, while she followed me, I took it from its place, holding it hard in my grasp, in triumphant vengeance for the grasp that it had had so long of me. With the woman who had given me the strength beside me, and in the light of the windows through which the late sun, streaming in, seemed to be dissolving the dark spell about me, I filed away first one and then the other of the metal bands. The first and then the second, as I worked and she watched me, broke with a sudden snap. I looked at her, she looked at me, and the heavy lid, held only by the pressure of my fingers and released by them, sprang back — and standing side by side we saw that which had been buried with Abed Horeb and shall surely be buried with me too, and with her, and, accept it or struggle with it with what hate he may, with every child of man, be he sheik or serf, rich or poor, powerful or helpless, who shall come into the world and shall go out of it, and that is all that it is possible for him to carry with him. *Nothing!*

# By the Hands of His Friends.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

I WAS living in Pima County, Arizona, in 1885. Joe Hillard was living there then. He is dead now, poor fellow, and only God and three fools know how he died. I was one of the three fools — perhaps the least guilty — certainly not blameless.

Everybody liked Hillard. He was a handsome, athletic fellow, wearing his hair long and flowing, in ideal cowboy fashion, brave and kind-hearted, brainy as any two men I have ever known, with a memory whose power was but little short of prodigious. He came originally from New Hampshire, I believe, but his personal history antecedent to 1881 was veiled in mystery. He himself never spoke of his youth, and no one in Arizona seemed to know anything about him prior to the summer he arrived in the Territory, nor to this day can I more than conjecture why he should have come out to a new land like Arizona — brilliant fellow that he was — and have spent his time roughing it in the hills, instead of remaining at home and cultivating his remarkable talents. And as for that conjecture, I leave it to the reader to discover.

In March, '82, in partnership with Hillard and four other men — all good prospectors and courageous fellows — I opened up a mine in the hills north-east of Tucson. We had no stamps — only two arrastres — but the ore was rich, and we were making the ground pay, when one night the Apaches came along and stole our burros, leaving us without any power with which to crush the ore, and crippling us entirely as far as quartz mining went.

We believed that the little band of Apaches was led by a white renegade, the most villainous being that had ever dragged a helpless captive over the cactus spikes at the heels of an infuriated mustang, and the night after Tom Hazen was shot through the

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back of the head, as he came walking quietly into camp, we hid our provisions in a rendezvous in the hills, and set about making preparations to exterminate our enemies. We proposed to kill the Apaches like reptiles, but we would hang their white leader like a murderer.

We had never seen this renegade. No white man in Arizona had ever seen him face to face, save the dead that lay out on the hot alkali-lands, or up in the hills, with their sealed lips baked by the sun or eaten away by ants. Yet, though he seemed as invisible as the Angel of Death, he was a terrible reality. He was the moving spirit behind "Apache Kid," when that noted Indian was striking like a rattlesnake through all Arizona, and many an ash-heap no bigger than a mole-hill cried out to heaven for vengeance upon him — ash-heaps that once were human beings!

The friendly Pima Indians, to whom were due all knowledge of this white renegade, had reported that his face was ghastly white, despite the fact that for years he had lived under the open sky in one of the hottest climates of the West, and that his features, while not ugly, were cruel as death.

We proposed to make of ourselves a party of vengeance, take this man prisoner, and execute him. Hillard was made our leader, for he was the best man amongst us, and we all knew it. We were alike courageous, but Hillard was infinitely shrewd in his bravery; we were all physically powerful, but Hillard handled his strength like a trained athlete.

In three days we had run to earth two of the Apaches, and killed them. I lost the little finger of my right hand in that affair.

This taste of retribution was so encouraging that Hillard, with something of his old-time spirit, made a jest about his hair. I have once before spoken of Hillard's hair. It was long and exceedingly luxurious, falling about his shoulders, straight down over his ears, in great profusion. He doubly tempted death to go among the Apaches with such an adornment, those red devils coveting his scalp from the first, yet nothing could prevail upon him to cut his hair short, or even to trim it down a little, and I believed in those days that he was proud of it as an addition to his personal beauty, which was very considerable; but, God help me, I know better now!

On the fifth morning after we had taken to our rendezvous — I think it was a Saturday — Dick Montrose went off at about eleven o'clock, intending to search a little ravine which, up to that time, had received no attention, for it seemed not likely that an enemy would conceal himself in such an exposed place. And, besides, the Apaches — in fact, all Indians — when man-hunting or being man-hunted, take to the highest places, the hills and the bluffs, endeavoring to look down upon the enemy, and thus have him at a great disadvantage.

Dick had promised to return within a couple of hours, but when twice that length of time had elapsed without our friend reappearing, we began to grow a bit worried. Hillard all the while had been pacing up and down uneasily, and a little later he suddenly put his hand to his head and exclaimed with deep emotion: "My God, I can see Dick sitting down somewhere, looking at me!"

I got up without a word and followed Hillard as he led the way, rifle in hand, over the path that our companion had lately taken. In about fifteen minutes we reached the west side of the ravine. Here we paused and carefully scanned the basin, but saw nothing of our friend. Then Hillard called my attention to something upon the east side of the cañon and about on a level with our eyes. From the distance it looked like the figure of a man.

It took us some twenty minutes to reach that east side of the cañon, and come up to the object which lately had caught our eyes. It was Dick, sitting on a rock, smiling.

"Well, Dick," I asked, "what luck?"

There was no reply, and, as I took a step nearer to Montrose, a shock of horror struck me like the discharge from a powerful electric battery. For the smile upon those lips was a ghastly illusion. Dick Montrose was dead!

We took the body back to camp — Hillard and I — and there gave it humane burial. Hillard, poor fellow, being of a nervous, intuitive temperament, was profoundly affected by our friend's murder, and I watched him closely, realizing that he was in danger of losing control of his reason.

Late that night I fell off into an uneasy sleep, to awaken in less than an hour from wretched dreams.

Reaching over my hand, I felt for Hillard, who always slept next to me. He was gone! Immediately I arose and looked about the camp for him, but he was nowhere to be found. I aroused my two companions, but the night was so dark we had to await the coming of day before beginning search.

At about five o'clock we found Hillard's footprints leading over a small alkali-flat to the north. The footprints led directly on for about two hundred yards, where, suddenly, in the center of the open flat, they turned about and pointed towards us. Hillard, from that point, had walked on *backwards!*

Yes, the poor fellow must have lost his reason entirely thenceforth to have gone backwards in walking, and there was something uncanny in following these strange footprints, heightened by the uncertainty of what we should find at their end.

Vainly endeavoring to silence our fears, we hastened on, and for another two hundred yards followed the scarcely perceptible footprints, to come flush at last with the opening of a small cave.

As no footprints led from this chamber, we judged that poor Hillard was still within its shelter, and we were about to enter and make search for him, when we were arrested by a sound, and driven to conceal ourselves behind a large boulder, from one side of which we could command a view of the cave, yet remain hidden.

Some one within the cleft was laughing. It was the laughter either of a madman or a fiend, and we waited and watched with chilled blood. In another moment a face appeared at the opening of the cave and looked about. It was ghastly white — such a face as might belong to a being whom the sun's rays had never touched; colorless as the white growth of a plant that one finds hidden beneath a board in a damp place out of the sun's reach. The eyes were like those of a new-born animal, without lashes, pale, weak, and ineffectual.

"Look!" I whispered to my companions. "It's the renegade leader of the Apaches!"

Stealthily the man came from the cave and made directly towards us, his feet twisted about until his toes pointed sideways from his body. As he came around the boulder which concealed us from view, we leapt forward and grappled him fast. Hobart had brought along his lariat, and this he wound about our prison-

er's body, pinioning his arms to his side, while I restrained the man from crying out by firmly grasping his throat. He made no struggle — only looked at us with his horrible eyes.

"Are you that devil," Hobart questioned, "who killed two of our camp?"

As the creature nodded and laughed, I believe I should have shot him on the spot had I not suddenly noticed that he was dressed in poor Hillard's clothes. I called the attention of my companions to this fact, and we instantly came to the conclusion that Hillard, too, had been made away with.

Leaving Hobart on guard, Rabe and I cautiously entered the cave. There we found Hillard's silver watch lying in the dirt!

Returning, we asked our prisoner whether he was the white man who had led the Apaches to repeated massacre of the settlers. He nodded and laughed. We asked him if he had murdered Hillard, whose clothing he wore. He nodded and laughed. We asked him if he were the devil himself. He nodded and laughed.

Were we in a trap? Had the renegade surrendered himself that his Apache followers might close about us unperceived, while our attention was distracted by a prisoner, and murder what remained of our little band? I looked down at the twisted, ghastly being lying upon the ground before me, his long hair matted about his ears and shoulders; then came Hobart's stern command.

*Hang him!*

*Hang him!* It was Rabe speaking.

"No," I said. "Not until we find Hillard's body."

Our prisoner laughed softly; as he did so, showing his teeth, which were chalky white, and as brittle as if never used.

"This thing," said Hobart, spurning with his foot the form on the ground, "is either a madman who in his saner moments leads the Apaches to massacres, or he is the devil himself." Then he addressed the prisoner: "You have the clothes of one of our party upon you. That man is missing. Now, either direct us to him, or explain how you came by his property — or else you die!"

We waited that the renegade might speak, but he only nodded his head and laughed.

Tom Hazen had been shot dead from behind; Dick Montrose had been murdered and mutilated; and now poor Hillard was

missing. I thought of these things, and as Hobart and Rabe began dragging the prisoner to a near-by tree, I remained silent.

A few minutes later and the man was paying for his evident crimes with his life. My companions had taken the matter into their own hands, and I turned my face away.

Yet still I questioned myself, Were we in some kind of a trap? And as I went with my friends from that ghastly swinging thing, a dreadful feeling of impending evil came over me.

Again we searched the cave for poor Hillard, or his body, but found only his knife, lying near where we had found his watch. Giving over further search of the place, we came out and looked at the burden of the mesquit.

A wind had come up, and the body, though dead, swayed to and fro and twisted about on the lariat, and as we looked — sickened by the sight, though our act had seemed one of justice — the long, matted hair of the dead man — hair strangely like Hillard's — suddenly slipped from the head that it covered and fell to the ground beneath, and slowly that late ghastly-white face of the dead man began turning out of our view, as the head and body were turned about by the wind, and silently, awfully — O God! shall I never forget it? — the face of poor Hillard came into our vision — black, strangled, horrible, looking down upon us from the head of that being whom we had hanged!

Poor, unhappy Hillard! Like Janus, he had been born with two faces: one in the front of his head — the face of a brave, intellectual man — the face we had long known; another in the back of his head, which, concealed throughout his life by a heavy covering of false hair, had become colorless, ghastly, unhuman.

Shocked by Dick's death, he had wandered away from camp, and while mentally unbalanced, had removed his false hair and concealed from us the face we knew so well, exposing in its stead what we took to be the face of the renegade leader of the Apaches.

Thus by the hands of his friends died Joseph Hillard: thus horribly!

# Triumphant Aunt Nancy.*

BY ANNA HUSTED SOUTHWORTH.

HE Rector's wife had presided over the Guild meeting with customary dignity, but as she asked one question that dignity was seriously threatened. An amused quiver about her lips grew beyond control, till the laughter ran up to her eyes, whence it flashed boldly forth to meet many answering smiles. One always smiled when "Aunt Nancy" was named, for while her peculiarities were many and vexatious, they were often so mirth-provoking that righteous anger was disarmed.

In a way, Aunt Nancy was a personage. She was the last representative of a once influential family, in a community where "family" still counted as a valuable asset. She had been a faithful worker in St. Jude's parish until age forbade active exertion, so, when her own savings were exhausted, the Church willingly came to her aid, allowing her to continue her small housekeeping in the two rooms she had occupied for many years. She often declared that she hoped to die in those rooms, taking a positive, if somewhat gruesome, pleasure in talking over every detail of her funeral, as if the perfection of that ceremony were her one remaining hope and delight. Matters went smoothly for several years, till, little by little, Aunt Nancy grew absurdly exacting in her demands. Then, long-suffering Charity became weary, and stringent measures were suggested. These were never carried out, for, after one encounter, no one cared to again face the old lady's indignation at any proposal of change in her way of living. She had bitterly resented offers of greater comfort in households where she might have been free from all care, clinging obstinately to her independent solitude, the ghost of an inherited exclusiveness.

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When forbearance seemed longer impossible, some kind soul was sure to murmur:

"Poor old woman! Why not let her have her way once more? She is past seventy, and we can't be troubled with her much longer!" So, the new whim would be humored.

Aunt Nancy's "parlor," as she proudly called the room, transformed to a bedroom at night, was the supreme delight of her life. There she might be found, every afternoon, carefully dressed, sitting in state, ready for visitors, and visitors came, finding her quaintly interesting with her stories of old times and her mincing airs of old-fashioned ceremony. Young girls were fond of her, and their pretty gifts of fruit and flowers, or dainty bits of bric-à-brac, gave her intense pleasure, while they enjoyed her shrewdly witty comments on the ways of this degenerate age, and found her memories of her own love affairs — they believed these altogether apocryphal — deliciously amusing. She would allow them to help her make tea over the spirit lamp, but no one was ever permitted to enter the second room where the mysteries of her ordinary cooking were performed. This secrecy became a joke among the young people, till they dared one another to an investigation. One day, a lovely girl, an especial favorite, presuming on her privileges, said with a coaxing caress, putting one hand on the forbidden door:

"Aunt Nancy, all the girls are just crazy to know how you manage your housekeeping so cleverly, and I know you ——"

Her sentence was never finished, for the old lady's anger was so intense, her air of outraged privacy so indignant, that the girl vowed she felt herself positively shriveling before the blazing eyes, while Aunt Nancy, stalking to the hall door, declared with bitter emphasis:

"You may go through this door at once, and I will close it after you! You have no sense of decency, and I never wish to see you again!"

Too dazed with such violence to attempt any defence, the young girl obeyed.

The memory of this episode, and of many similar instances, was in the minds of the ladies, who glanced at each other in puzzled dismay, while laughter faded from their eyes, giving place to

perplexity. The silence grew oppressive, till at length a gentle voice asked:

"How old is Aunt Nancy?"

"Seventy-seven last month," answered the President, adding, "She is much too old, and far too feeble, to live alone any longer."

"Her will has the strength of ten," murmured the Secretary, looking up with a smile reminiscent of fruitless encounters.

"Really, ladies, we must settle this," the President had remarked, when there entered a sweet-faced little woman, wearing modified Quaker costume, for "Miss Alice," as she was called in pretty Southern fashion, was born and reared among the Friends. She had never abandoned their plain dress, the close bonnet, or the satin-smooth bands of hair close folded over the ears. She was known as an incarnate ministering angel, who seemed at a glance to divine a need and its remedy. Her advent was warmly welcomed; a general sigh of relief was heard, and the puzzling question was at once referred to her.

"Oh, let me breathe a moment!" she laughingly pleaded, and, after an instant, said in her musical tones:

"I am so sorry to be so late, but my delay may help to settle this difficulty. You know that our new "Home" is just completed. I have been there all the morning, going over all its details thoroughly, and I am convinced that it is the very best place for Aunt Nancy, besides being so attractive that she cannot dislike it. I have presumed to select a room for her, and, if the ladies agree, I will do my part in suitably installing her there. The first outlay will be considerable, but we shall know that she is safe and comfortable, while we shall be free from many annoyances, now unavoidable."

This was a long speech for the little lady. As she sat down, an emphatically approving murmur rose, only stilled by the stroke of the gavel, calling for order. A formal proposition was made, and a formal vote taken. There was no dissenting voice, and the appeal for money met a generous response.

"You know," said Miss Alice, "everything must be new, though of course the old lady can retain any cherished treasures."

"How soon can the place be ready?" asked the President.

"Just as soon as the furniture can be arranged," replied Miss Alice.

Details were quickly discussed, and it was agreed to keep the decision secret from Aunt Nancy till everything was prepared for her possession.

Two weeks passed. Again the Guild met. Miss Alice reported all plans successfully achieved, and the ladies adjourned for a visit of inspection. The result delighted them, so an hour and a day were named, and a committee appointed to welcome the pensioner, whom Miss Alice undertook to bring to her new abode.

On the morning of the appointed day, Miss Alice sent a message, telling Aunt Nancy that at three o'clock she would take her for a drive. Then, having despatched this, she found herself trying to combine diplomatic phrases which would persuade the old lady to accept the new arrangement amiably. No form satisfied her. The matter haunted her till she stepped into her carriage, deciding to trust the inspiration of the moment, but feeling perfectly sure that all language was impotent in the contest before her.

Aunt Nancy was ready and radiant at the proposed pleasure, for she dearly loved the Park, with its splendid oaks, while still more she loved the luxurious carriage, the fine horses, and the temporary sense of personal importance lent by the entire equipage. The gay crowds filling the drives, the picturesque throngs of children on the wide playgrounds, the swans in the lake, and the wonderful October coloring just beginning to glorify the hills, gave her intense pleasure. She was in her most gracious mood, and it seemed as if the mood might last, so, after an hour's drive, Miss Alice said, brightly:

"I think we both want a cup of tea, and I know you will like to see St. Jude's new building, It has taken years of thought and exertion, as you know, but it is done, and it is perfect. Patrick, you may drive to the Home."

Without seeming to note the effect of that hated word, she proceeded: "The ladies of the Guild are having a little reception this afternoon, to celebrate the opening, and I am sure you will like to meet them. The place is so charming, that I think the old ladies will be very happy there."

No response from Aunt Nancy. Only a boding silence. A sudden chill was in the air which had been so sunny a moment before, and Miss Alice, as she glanced sidewise, noted a stiffening of the whole body, a swift tightening of the lips, and the dreaded deep wrinkle between the eyes which she had so often seen. She took no apparent heed, but talked gaily on, pointing out, as they drove through the gates, the lovely lawns and the bright flower-beds, and calling attention, as they drew up at the entrance, to the arrangement carefully made to avoid wearying effort.

Miss Alice sprang lightly out. The footman was ready to assist Aunt Nancy, but she brushed him aside, saying tartly: "No, young man! I may not be quite so spry as younger folks, but I do not need your help yet!"

She grimly followed her friend through the wide, palm-decked hall to the elevator, but there she stopped abruptly, remarking: "*You* may go up in that box if you like! *I won't!* Thank Heaven, my legs are not too stiff to take me over the stairs. Where are the stairs?"

Miss Alice laughed, and led the way, for only one flight need be climbed. When, a little breathless, they reached the landing, a wide window framed an enchanting picture, but no beauty had any charm for Aunt Nancy. She was suspicious that a long-dreaded and abhorred destiny awaited her. Bitter revolt filled her heart. When asked to admire the view, she scornfully sniffed, and exclaimed:

"I can smell the tea, and I hear Mrs. Preston's voice. Are all the Guild ladies here?"

"Oh, no!" explained her friend. "There are only a few of them; just those who have had this place in charge. You know all of them. Here we are! Ladies, I have brought Aunt Nancy for a cup of tea!"

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed the Rector's wife, warmly greeting the apparently unwilling guest, whose ungracious manner melted a little, when welcomes were repeated, and a great easy chair placed for her at the pretty table, but conversation was difficult, till the fragrant tea had warmed and brightened every one. Various Church news was told, and matters of common interest discussed. Aunt Nancy's counsel was asked, the project of the

new Home was introduced, and its history rehearsed, its admirable arrangement was praised, and at length, the Rector's wife, rising, took the old lady's hand, saying:

"Come, Aunt Nancy! Let me show you one room which we have fitted up for an especial guest. This apartment is only a parlor where the ladies may receive their friends, have their little card parties, or sit and gossip when they choose. Down-stairs there is a Chapel and a lecture-room, where concerts and other entertainments will be frequently given." Then, pushing aside a portière she continued:

"There! Isn't this charming?"

The room was bright with sunset sunshine, and gay with flowers. A thick, richly colored rug covered the floor; an inviting couch, with many cushions, stood at the foot of the bed; a little work-table was in the bay window; a larger one, beneath some bookshelves, filled a corner; a folding screen hid the toilet; the bureau, with ample drawers and large mirror, showed an embroidered cover, while large rocking-chairs suggested hours of cozy gossip. Aunt Nancy looked gloomily at each article pointed out, and said nothing.

Miss Alice felt like a guilty conspirator, but opening a panel in the wainscoting, she exclaimed: "Look at this cupboard! All sorts of goodies can be kept here, and then, this is the nicest closet! Did you ever see anything more perfect? There are shelves for boxes, and drawers with locks, and hooks for more gowns than any old lady ought to have! Isn't it nice, Aunt Nancy? Will not the old lady who will have this be fortunate?"

"May be!" drily vouchsafed Aunt Nancy. Then, in a defiant tone, "Who is going to have it?"

Miss Alice's eyes were dim with emotion, as she took both the withered hands in her own, saying warmly:

"Dear Aunt Nancy, this is your room!"

The hands were violently snatched away, but Miss Alice went on, with affectionate eagerness: "Your own room, for the rest of your life, where you shall be comfortable, and served without any care or exertion. You know you are too old to live alone any longer, and we have arranged all this with much loving thought for you. To-morrow, we will have all the things you may care to

keep brought here, and I'll come and have five o'clock tea with you! You like it, do you not?"

There was an instant's pregnant silence. All nerves were tense. The very air seemed electric, and then came the explosion, for Aunt Nancy almost shouted:

"No! I *don't* like it, and you knew I wouldn't, or you would have asked me. You know I want my own place; and if it isn't so fine, it suits me. I am perfectly well, perfectly able to do my work. I want my privacy and my independence, and —" with shrill emphasis, — "if I *am* seventy-seven, I haven't *yet given up the hope of making some good man happy!* I'd like to know how any man would look coming here to visit me! No, ladies, you meant to be kind, but you have made a mistake. I don't want to come here, and — I *never will*, unless I am brought by force!"

Trembling with excitement, she sank into a chair, and sobbed out her usual complaints of poverty and heartless treatment. Aghast, the ladies looked at each other. The scene was painful. Pitiful Miss Alice was inclined to yield once more. Not so the Rector's wife. There had been far too much yielding. She waited, till the sobbing subsided a little, till she saw that Aunt Nancy was furtively watching her *effect* behind her drenched handkerchief. Then, laying a kindly hand on the still quivering shoulders, she said, gently:

"Aunt Nancy, do you think this is right or wise? We want to know you safely sheltered; we think we are doing the best thing possible. You are unjust to the Church. The Church is willing to do all that is necessary, but it must be allowed to choose its own course, and we have decided that this is best. You will accept our gift, will you not, as kindly as it is bestowed?"

Still intractable, Aunt Nancy shook off the gentle hand, gave one angry, tearful glance at the speaker and, rising, turned to Miss Alice, imploring:

"Take me home, Miss Alice! *Please* take me home! I can't bear this, and I know the good Lord will find a way out of it for me, if you will not! Take me home!"

Pitiful as she was, Miss Alice could be firm, when a decision was once reached. She knew the battle must be fought to a finish there and then, or forever abandoned. Her turn in the fray

had come, and bravely she met the obligation. Turning to the shaking woman, she said, quietly:

"Aunt Nancy, your rooms have always been rented by the month, and when we decided upon this plan I gave your landlord notice. Your term expires on Saturday. To-day is Wednesday. After Saturday, this will be your home, if St. Jude's is to provide one. I am sorry to grieve you, sorry to find you so unreasonable; but you must submit, and once you are settled I am sure that you will be content. Come now! Good-by, ladies!"

Aunt Nancy utterly forgot her manners. Rejecting Miss Alice's hand, looking at no one, she drew herself up, and marched from the room with an air of deeply offended majesty, which would have been grotesque at any other time. Not a syllable did she utter till the carriage reached her own door, and then, as she was about to speak, Miss Alice calmly prevented her, saying:

"I will send Patrick and Mary in the morning to help you with your packing, and at noon I will come to see that the moving is carefully done, and take you to the Home. Good-night, now!"

Once more, choking with wrath, the old lady tried to speak, but Miss Alice had no mind to indulge her. She paid no attention, and gave the order, "Home, Patrick," while only the footman heard the enraged exclamation:

"*I won't go there! I won't!*"

Suffocating with anger, she slowly unlocked her door, but failed to see a note near the threshold. Mechanically she put her wrap and bonnet in their places. Then, suddenly realizing that this was her last evening there, she sank moaning to her knees, sobbing out with an exceeding bitter cry:

"O my God! Have mercy! Spare me this awful thing! Show me some way of escape! Take me out of the world, or let me still have my own home! Oh, have pity! have pity!"

Words failed, and moaning only continued till exhaustion came, but the very utterance of her passion seemed in a way to assuage it, for there crept into her heart a strange quiet — a faith that her agonized prayer would be heard — and at length she rose from her knees to light the room, now almost entirely dark. As the gas blazed up, her eye fell on the white paper, and she stooped to take it, wondering.

The envelope bore no stamp; the writing was strange. She sought her glasses, and with shaking fingers broke the seal, unfolded the single sheet, and read — this:

October 15.

DEAR NANCY:

Forty years ago I asked you to marry me. You refused, preferring your independence. I have never forgotten how that refusal wounded me — how hard it was to give you up. I could not remain where everything reminded me of my pain, and, as you know, I went to Virginia, making my home there. That home has now been desolate for two years. I am utterly alone. Life has taught us both many things, brought us many sorrows. Perhaps the experiences have brought us nearer to each other. I am coming this evening to ask the question I asked forty years ago — to see if you will not share my life for the time that may be left us. The shadows will not be so heavy if we walk through them together, and, perhaps —"

"At evening time it shall be light!"

Faithfully yours,

JOHN ANDERSON.

The paper dropped from her hand.

"Manna from Heaven!" she breathed. Her head was whirling. "John Anderson," the long-ago sweetheart, was to be her deliverer! Her prayer was indeed abundantly answered, and once more she fell on her knees, this time with inarticulate cries of rapturous gratitude. Adoration and praise soon gave place to crowding, bewildering memories of that far-away time when she had put love aside, proudly preferring to walk alone. Then fancies swarmed of what still might be; there came delicious dreams of quiet evenings by a warm fireside with her very own

"John Anderson, my Jo John"

facing her, till all sorrow and dread fell away, as did the burden of Christian when he had crossed the "Slough of Despond."

Aunt Nancy also felt firm ground beneath her. She sprang up, erect, exultant, supremely content. "The Old Ladies' Home!" — Oh, not for her! Wretched old crones, doddering, and half imbecile, might find a refuge there, and they were quite welcome! She thanked God that her mind was clear, her health unimpaired, and "O, 'John'" should find his house well ordered, his comfort her first care!

Suddenly remembering the events of the afternoon, she frowned, then laughed aloud at the amazing transition from despair to this blessed hope; she wondered what Miss Alice would say and, forgetting her years, actually took a dancing step in her triumph.

She went to her glass, anxiously smoothing her gray hair; she sought bits of sacredly cherished lace, and at last, as a supreme joy, she unfolded with delicious emotion the dove-gray silk gown which had been her last gift from Miss Alice. She had never worn it; it seemed too fine for her use, and she had secretly thought she would keep it for her burial. Burial was far from her thought now. She was alive, tingling with new life in every nerve. The gray silk should be her wedding gown, and lifting it, she kissed the soft folds as any girl might have done.

As she shook out the rustling silken breadths, their murmur whispered a reminder of the constant kindness her friend had shown, and something like remorse for her anger troubled her joy. The remorse did not last long. She was too happy. She would write a note of apology, telling her great news at the same time, and again she laughed aloud, fancying the amazement her news would cause all the ladies.

Later, when the stars were out and the little parlor cozy with firelight, "John" came. Aunt Nancy had only thought of the stalwart, black-haired man of her youth, quite forgetting the dealing of the years, and so it was a bit of a shock when she opened her door to the white-headed, bespectacled individual who claimed her welcome, saying at once, with wistful simplicity:

"Am I to come into your life at last, Nancy?"

Silently she bent her head. As silently, he touched her forehead with his lips, and then, hand in hand, they sat down to talk over years past, and plan for those for which they hoped. Who shall translate the sober rapture of those hours?

. . . . . .

As Miss Alice, breakfasting the next morning, poured her brother's coffee, she told him the story of Aunt Nancy's rebellion, adding, kindly:

"I am 'most sorry for her. Giving up her privacy seems to her the end of all things, but really, at seventy-seven, she must not live alone any longer, and when once she is settled, content will come."

Then, remembering, she laughed her low, sweet laugh, and added, "But, oh, Ned! You should have seen and heard her! Such a tragedy queen in her wrath! Positively she was magnificent, and we were all so astounded that we never even smiled

when she declared that she had '*not yet given up the hope of making some good man happy, if she was seventy-seven years old!*' There's a steadfast hope for you!"

Peals of laughter rang through the room, and Miss Alice was wiping tears of mirth from her eyes when the butler appeared at the open door:

"A note for you, ma'am!"

"Aunt Nancy's apology, or some new petition, I suppose," remarked the lady, recognizing stationery which she had given, and the queer, cramped writing.

"I wonder how she will express herself, without abating her dignity."

Brother Ned looked curious also, as the envelope was cut, then startled, for Miss Alice fell back in her chair, gasping out, "Ned, the old woman has gone crazy! Just listen!

DEAR MISS ALICE:

Will you come to St. Jude's this morning at half past eleven o'clock? I am to be married at that hour, to Mr. John Anderson, of Virginia. We shall be leaving directly after the ceremony, and I should like to say good-by to you and the other ladies who have been so kind to me.

Sincerely yours,

AUNT NANCY.

P. S. John insists that I shall take nothing from these rooms, so I will leave my furniture for some less fortunate old woman, who perhaps will also appreciate the charms of "The Old Ladies' Home."

P. S. No. 2. My cat is already chloroformed.

"Well, Ned, what do you think of that?"

The man was laughing too heartily to reply at once, but when he had caught his breath he exclaimed:

"Think! You know she told you the Lord would find a way for her, and it looks very much as if He had done it. Plucky old girl! Not crazy, by a long shot! I'm going with you to that wedding, and I'm going to kiss the bride."

He did, amazing Aunt Nancy with the sudden salute, and bringing to the faded old face a most becoming ghost of a blush.

That was five years ago. Aunt Nancy still lives, ruling her "John" right royally, to his infinite content.

# In the Great Shadow.*

BY W. L. LOCKWOOD.

THE smell of the sea came to him as he toiled at his desk in the great warehouse office — a salt breath freighted with the odors of boxes and bales gathered from the four corners of the earth. It stirred the papers heaped before him, and tugged at the leaves of the books scattered about in easy reach. It played in the hair about his broad, square forehead and fanned to greater effort the working of the alert mind within.

It mattered not to John Mosely that the day's schedule of labor had grown to fourteen hours and more. He had schooled himself to application and had set before him the task of doing all things that came to him with the whole power of his being. He had fought his way to an education against the barrier of poverty and inherited ignorance, against an inclination to idleness and the cravings of irresponsibility. Now idleness he had forgotten, ignorance he had overcome, and poverty he felt was of the distant past.

For the time, ever since his employer's illness, the direction of the great shipping business had been shifted to his shoulders. Its vast magnitude he had grasped quickly, its manifold problems he had solved clearly.

But there had been one sore disappointment in it all, the sorer that it was shared by his employer, borne with silent uncomplaining as strong, brave men bear things. Young Copeland, the son and heir, the prop upon which the elder had sought to lean, upon which to shift some of the burdens of his great interests — the youth upon whom he had lavished every care and preparation for

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a share in the world's work and affairs — had proved a broken reed.

As Mosely ran over the manifold details that focussed each night at his desk, the suspicions, that he had but too willingly put aside, gave place to conviction. There were discrepancies in the young man's accounts; and as the figures stood revealed in all their nakedness, their magnitude staggered him. He pushed the books aside and closed his eyes to think.

When he opened them again the maker of this new burden stood before him.

"You're working late," he said, his eyes the while playing upon the open pages on the desk.

"I shall be before the night is done," was the somewhat stern reply.

"Making up a statement for the Governor? Maybe I can help you?"

"You can, here," and Mosely laid his hand upon the telltale pages.

The young man before him read his meaning and his glance shifted uneasily.

"Well, you can fix it, some way. I'll make it up later."

"Can you?"

Something of Mosely's mistrust, of his contempt for deception, had crept into his voice, into his eyes. The other resented it.

"And if I can't," he said with some heat, "it will make no difference to you. You'll get your salary just the same. Besides, it's a matter between the Governor and me. So leave it out, or fix it up, as you choose."

"I cannot leave out such a matter and can fix my reports only as the facts warrant."

"See here, Mosely," and the young man spoke in the sudden passion discovery of his wrong-doing had evoked. "You're not the whole thing. I'll be the master here some day, and if you want to stay you'll let this thing slide. It's nothing out of your pocket, anyway."

The quick blood sent a deeper shade to Mosely's dark face. The taunt cut him. The slight put upon his idea of honesty hurt him. The open suggestion of bribery angered him. The young man before him blundered on: —

"Oh, I know what you're working and scheming for. You think the Governor means to take you in — give you a hand in the business — make you a partner. But let me tell you, we all know your game; and what is more, you needn't count on playing any trump card with Helen, either. My sister — "

Mosely was on his feet, had arisen suddenly, and his tall, broad-shouldered form towered before the smaller man in striking contrast of power. He held up a hand in warning as a strong man does to a child.

"Don't go too far," he said. "You are over-stepping the bounds of patience."

The steady eyes held a depth of warning there was no mistaking. The younger man wavered and sought victory in retreat.

Mosely stood looking into the depths of bales and casks and boxes long after the sound of footfalls died away. Why had her name been mentioned? The other slurs he put behind him. They did not hurt. But Miss Copeland — had they discussed his name in connection with hers? Had she imagined — believed — that he sought other favor in her father's sight — in hers — than was his due for faithful business service?

He sank into his chair and sat on at the desk, his work untouched, striving with poor human logic to discover why her brother's idle words should have moved him so. What if there should have been some such implication, some hint of warning? How utterly needless it was. And then, from the mass of papers on his desk, there stood out before him an envelope, unopened, addressed to him in the painful scrawlings of illiteracy. He picked it up mechanically. No need to note the postmark. He knew from whom it came.

The hand closed over it, and the head was bowed above.

"How utterly needless!"

The strong man forgot his strength. The words sounded in the silence like the sob of a child.

Presently there came through the window, with the scent of sweet sea air, the sound of a banjo thrumming and a song of the sunny South: —

"Mah soul done long fo' de glory up a yonder,
Above de clouds;
Mah feet am a achin' fo' toh wander
Above de clouds.

"Chune up de strings ob jubilation,
Mah pooh, pooh chil'en;
Fo' dah you'll end yo' tribulation,
Mah pooh, pooh chil'en.

"Up a yonder, whah de shadows
Gwine nevah be no mo';
Up a yonder, whah de brack folks
Done be washed white lak snow."

The man at the desk raised his head and listened. The weird cadence of the droning soothed his troubled thoughts, but with a painful tenderness. By the wharf the singers were gathered on the sands, their dancing figures showing in fantastic shadows before the beach-fire's glow.

A strange impulse moved him. With them there were no ambitions, no longings, no cravings for the unsatisfying. Just to live as nature's children. Why was not theirs the happier lot?

He passed the watchman dozing at the door and sat down on an upturned cask in the shadow, to be near and yet unseen. He would resist the call of the strings and the shuffling feet.

The music ceased as the figure of a woman, bent and old, came into the light of the fire. Cymby — apple-woman by day, vender of strange charms by night — gray-haired, bowed with the weight of many years, wise in the uncanny ways of unseen things.

Respect for the weaver of mystic charms moved the dusky circle to the silence of attentive awe. The old woman read her power in the faces about. She wielded it through ignorance. The man in the shadow had sought his through knowledge.

Slowly the bent figure raised itself to unwonted height, and the stick with which she walked was upstretched to the crescent moon.

"Dance, mah chil'en, sing while de new moon shine. Afo' dat silber rim done sho' agin, yoh singin' gwine be still, yoh hearts be sad. I sees de suff'n an' de deaf, mah chil'en, foh de brack fo'ks hyah 'bouts. By-m-by brack dem'n come a stalkin', an' a stalkin', an' a callin', an' a callin'."

Round and round she turned, moving toward the silent figures about with strange and solemn stride, her stick outpointed to each staring, frightened face.

"Toh you, an' you, an' you he crook de han'," and the long, bony fingers twitched a beckoning to each one alike. "What you gwine say? What you gwine do?"

She paused and looked to each one for answer. The silence was unbroken.

"Dance, mah chil'en, sing while de new moon shine." She raised her staff again. "It show me de way toh de hid'n t'ings, de yarbs and de roots what grows in de wood."

She paused suddenly in the chant and her eyes showed the cunning drift of her words.

Mosely watched them gather about her and heard the clink of the small coin that purchased immunity from the pending doom. The scene had fascinated him for the time, had seemed to awaken some of the superstition she had conjured up in the minds of her black auditors.

Suddenly the old woman stopped her bartering and, turning, threw a tiny package of her wares into the shadow where he sat. It fell at his feet. He picked it up out of curiosity.

Ashamed of the fascination that had drawn him to the place, he retraced his way to the office, walking in the shadows; but with the mystic potion still clasped tightly in his hand.

Miss Copeland was standing by his desk.

"My brother," she began, "said he was coming here to-night. You have seen him?"

"Yes."

"And he told you of what he has done?"

"I knew it."

"Oh!" The slender fingers clasped and unclasped themselves nervously as if in pain.

"Does father know it, too?"

"Not yet."

She looked up suddenly at his coupling of the words.

"Will he?"

"I fear he must."

"I told him to come to you — that you would hide his shame — our shame — until it could be covered up, until we could make the — the shortage good — he and I."

There was no pleading in the voice. The only note Mosely heard was one of disappointment. It was a business call. The thought kept ever before him.

"Did you think I would?" he asked, almost bluntly.

"But for a little time," she hurried on, evading the directness of his question. "I will help him pay it back. I have some here," and she tugged at the clasp of her purse. "He has been foolish; but father, if he knew, would never forgive him. With him honesty is everything. Besides, it will make no difference to you."

He did not touch the money she held out to him. How like the brother's reasoning it was. Why had they both believed his honesty a question of wages — to be bartered for or set aside at will? His reply was cold and harsh, in spite of his great pity for her:

"You say honesty is everything to your father. I am his employee." He could not hide the bitterness of the thought.

As she looked at him, the sudden change that came into her eyes confused him. Unconsciously she crushed the bank-notes in her hand as if to hide them.

"Forgive me," she said simply; but there was a wealth of tenderness, of admiration, of confusion in the downward droop of her eyes. Then she struggled on: "I did not mean it so. You do me wrong. I did not see it in that light, or I would not have come. You must think me base indeed to ask such a thing."

She stood bravely before him.

"If you had granted what I asked, I should have thought it dishonest too, when soberer reason came. But women do not think; they obey the promptings of a less calculating faculty."

"Perhaps that is why men turn to them when cold logic proves all unavailing."

"Ah, that time never comes to some men," she replied, her eyes fixed upon him for the fleeting portion of a second.

"To all," he answered earnestly. "Principle, duty, the set barriers of right — honor itself — fade sometimes and leave the strongest of men where they began — at the threshold of uncertainty."

She looked out at the lights and the water.

"If you think I asked this thing because I thought your position and that of my brother would make refusal impos-

sible, you are wrong, oh, so wrong." There was a note of pleading in her voice that moved him strangely. "It was because of our old friendship," she faltered on, "because I knew you."

"You make it doubly hard," he answered, miserably.

"Rather have I made it easier," she returned, "since friendship lessens obligation and opens the way to perfect confidence and understanding."

She held out her hand as if to say good-night. He took it in both of his and looked down at her. The love that he had treasured in silence, that he had argued against with every cunning of his brain, that had slept with him and waked with him, that he had thrust from him and drawn back again with hungry defiance; the love that he had clung to in the face of fate, swept over him with resistless force. She seemed to feel its subtle power and to care not to resist.

He took her face between his hands and kissed her tenderly, almost reverently, upon the forehead.

They walked side by side through the long rows of cotton bales, out to where her carriage waited. There was no need of words. He dared not think of what it meant. The thought to her was enough without explanation.

Through the carriage door she looked at him standing there in the strength and perfection of his young manhood. He carried the vision of that new and tenderer light in her eyes back to the papers and ledgers on his desk, back into that other life of actuality, of cold calculation, of exacting honor.

He stood as one unmindful of the world. Through the window he saw the lights and the great bosom of the sea. The sounds of the city's life came to him as from afar. And then the twang of the banjo and the sound of the plaintive melody:

"Up yonder whah de shadows
Gwine nevah be no mo';
Up yonder, whah de brack folks
Done be washed white lak snow."

As the crooning cadence swelled, he followed it, humbly, unconsciously at first. But a responsive chord awakened within him and he hummed it to himself presently, in strangely perfect unity.

Under its magic impulse and the deeper passions the night had stirred, the music seemed of wondrous power. His body swayed in unison and at last his feet moved in keeping with the rhythm.

Suddenly the music ceased and the sharp whistle of a steamboat smote the air. The man by the desk stopped his song and his feet were still. A sob broke from his lips, that were drawn and white. His hand closed again on the envelope with its strangely uncouth lettering. Not then, in his anguish and hopelessness of soul, did he see that it no longer contained its missive, that an unknown hand had filched his secret. The suggestion of whence it came brought him down to earth again and he buried his head in the dust of his great despair.

He had come as guest at her father's bidding, hungering for her companionship, thirsting to taste again the joy of her trust and faith in him. But under the trees in the gathering shadows, he paused — afraid. How could he come into her presence again and longer hope to battle against the love, the fate that had encompassed him? Vaguely he measured, there in the twilight, his power, his purpose, his end in life, and found the balance all against him.

He turned irresolutely. Better to go now before it was too late, while he had the power; better to go for always. The dominant will, the reason that he had made his master, he felt returning in accustomed power.

Then she came to him from an arbor close at hand, her fair face frankly happy at his presence — and reason ceased its sway.

They stood in silence for a time. She was the first to speak.

"Have you served love or honor more?"

He looked at her in wonder. Her eyes were moist, her voice strangely tender.

"My brother still holds his honor in my father's eyes. Your reports have set his accounts aright." She went on with the tears glistening bravely on her cheeks, and never cared to call them back: "But the savings of a lifetime — your lifetime — have been sacrificed to do it — for love or honor?"

She took his hand in maidenly frankness and held it while he stood confusedly before her.

"I thought I had learned of the ways of men; but you have taught me my unknowingness. There are so many of the other kind, those who imagine that name and fortune are the earmarks of manhood — men who live but for themselves and, dying, leave the world not better, but worse, for their having been."

Mosely drank in each word with hungry soul. When he replied there was an eagerness in his voice and eyes that showed her the love she longed to read again as she had read it on that evening by his desk:

"The man who began at the lowest — the very bottom — who ran the gamut of temptation and still retained his self-respect, his fear of God; the man who, without hand to help, compelled recognition from the world, against whose honor no finger had ever turned — would stand in your sight as worthy of your respect — your love — no matter what his family, his ancestry, might have been?"

His hand closed over hers in his eagerness. She felt it tremble and the tenseness of his grasp hurt her.

"Do you doubt it?"

He stood holding her close to him and looking down into her face. But even in her great joy she marveled at the shadow of despair and anguish that crept into his eyes. He raised her hands to his lips and bowed his head over them reverently. His eyes were closed and his face was drawn as if in pain.

But her perfect joy swept him beyond the curbing of all bitterness, all reason. It sat with them at table and he could not eat for it. It seemed to fill the glasses with wine of intoxicating flavor. It painted the blossoms a lovelier hue and taught their fragrances new depths of sweetness. It cast upon him a spell he was powerless to dethrone.

Under the magic influence he saw her father fill his glass with formal ceremony; heard him speak as if to some unseen stranger at the board:

"I don't make a point of talking shop at home, Mosely, but I mean to break the rule to-night, briefly. Fill your glass, sir, and yours, little girl.

"You know what the business has grown to be, Mosely; know it as well as I. I built it up honestly and squarely and I'm proud

of it. But I am getting on in years and want rest. The burden must slip to younger shoulders."

He got to his feet, glass in hand. "Stand, girl," he went on. "My lawyer has drawn up some partnership papers and I want you to drink the health of the man whose name I am going to fill in — guess it won't choke either of you — John Mosely."

He drained his glass in silence. She tried to drink some of hers and ended with her arms about her father's neck and a suspicion of a sob in her voice.

John Mosely gripped the arms of his chair in an effort to arrange the wild tangle of emotions that swept over him.

"Get back to your place, youngster," the father ordered in playful sternness. "There is more wine here and I propose to use it."

He refilled his glass deliberately.

"Mosely," he went on, "I am giving you nothing you don't deserve in the business; but when I come to this second toast, hang it, sir, my heart fails me. She has been my companion, my inspiration, my sunshine, ever since she became motherless. I wouldn't give her to the best man on God's green footstool. But I might share her, Mosely; and let me tell you, boy, the lucky scoundrel I take into that partnership must make me a stricter accounting than ever ledger gave."

He raised his glass again and there was the glint of a tear in his eye as he went on:

"I drink to the most fortunate of men — "

"Stop, father, and hear me first!"

Young Copeland stood behind his sister's chair. There was a note of warning in his voice that sent the color from her cheek and kept his father's cup untasted. They waited for him to explain.

"Who is this man to whom you would give my sister? Do you know him?"

"Well," and the father's voice struggled with his rising anger. "A man who has made a place for himself in the world of men, who has been honest and upright in all things. A man who has lived a clean and wholesome life. Aye, I know him. He's a man."

"His family, his race — " the son began.

"Respectable, I know, even though they could not squander a fortune on the education of a son and support him in idleness as some fathers do. Instead, he has been keeping a widowed mother in comfort and luxury."

"Do you know her?" the son persisted.

"No," was the elder's prompt reply, "but I mean to, soon."

"You may, and now."

The young man opened the door and a woman entered. Early years of toil, rather than the accumulation of age, had bent her shoulders and silvered the hair about her temples. But the face was still young and not uncomely. There was strength of character in its every line and the eyes were eloquent of womanly affection as they found the object of their concern.

Young Copeland watched John Mosely's face. It was white and rigid in the intensity of its emotions. The man who had so scorned the suggestion of deceit was silent. The triumph of a life's endeavor, the satisfying of a soul's long yearning were beyond upgiving then.

"What wretched jest is this?" the sister asked, going to her father's side in her bewilderment.

"Ask her," the son replied.

"This young man told me John was sick, and so I came to him," the woman faltered. "But he is well." Her eyes wandered from face to face seeking some explanation of the deception.

"Who are you?" The father's voice was stern and harsh.

"His mother."

John Mosely staggered to his feet. The father, heedless of his daughter's white, frightened face, stalked to the side of the trembling woman and read the confirmation of his fears, saw the unmistakable tracings of the race that had suffered bondage and the scourge, the race that from darkness and night had been born anew into a life of possibility and hope, but with the scars of the shackles and the great shadow still upon it.

"Woman," he began in a voice that carried hint of the indecision, the anguish of his heart, "I do not ask you who has prompted your coming here or for what reason; but my daughter loves this man and so do I."

He broke off suddenly and beat his forehead with his hand. "God in heaven! It cannot be." Then seizing her suddenly by the arm until she cried out in pain, he went on hoarsely, appealingly, piteously, as he peered into her frightened face:

"Tell me, swear to me the truth!" He forced her to her knees with the intensity of his grasp. "Is that man your son?"

Like a frightened, hunted thing her hands were outstretched to the other for courage and support, the hands that had toiled for him that he might rise out of the shadow to the higher way. Her eyes were fixed on his face. Her love, her pride in him were reflected in their hidden depths. But what were they, what was all sacrifice compared to his happiness? What were truth and honesty, that they should not bend to his good? The struggle was brief, measured by the ticking of the great clock that sounded so strangely fateful in the silence, but it ran the compass of a lifetime weighed by the anguish of her heart.

"I lied to you all," she said simply. "I was only — his nurse."

The wailings of forsaken children came from the tenements and alleys by the water side. Dogs howled dismally in the streets, or slunk away to hide in secluded places, shunning human kind.

The sun hung heavy in a sky of burnished brass. The hot, stifling air reeked with foul odors and the strange scent of pungent drugs. The gutters ran in steaming sluggishness.

Men hurried through the streets with white, frightened faces, shunning their fellows. There was never a laugh or a smile down there by the water in that sultry, plague-stricken, August air.

And when night came, with its merciful shadows and curtaining, wagons rumbled through the streets bearing their burdens of rough pine boxes, and tired men, with cloth-draped faces, staggered from dismal doorways with other burdens and piled them on.

Under cover of the darkness, frightened creatures fled from the death-stricken, accursed place into the cool lanes, abandoning homes, their dead and living, to escape the impending doom, only to be halted by the armed men at quarantine and hurried back in fear and misery.

The great steamers swung idly at the wharves. Spiders spun their webs about the waiting bales and casks. The avenues of

deep-sea barter, like the rest, were closed to all the world. It was a city set apart to suffer and to bear alone.

As John Mosely looked upon the scene of desolation Cymby hobbled by, leaning heavily on her magic wand. Pausing, she looked in at the open window. Memory of her strange prophecy came back to him.

"I sees de suff'n an' de deaf, mah chil'n, foh de brack fo'ks hyah 'bouts. By-m-by de brack dem'n come a stalkin' an' a stalkin'."

How strangely true had proved her words. The visitation had come as a heavy hand indeed to the black folks, for on the grim record of that time of death those gathered in the shadows of the night were from the race the old negress had forewarned.

Mosely turned to a drawer at hand and drew forth the little parcel she had once thrown at his feet. He turned it irresolutely in his hand; then, flinging it upon the floor, ground it beneath his heel.

"Not that! O God, not back to that!" he cried in the sudden gripping of superstition's sway. "Leave me reason until the end."

He finished the brief page of writing on his desk and, sealing it, bid the office boy deliver it to its address. The heat grew strangely heavy. He walked out to where the water lapped sluggishly at the slime-coated piles.

Sitting on the rough-hewn plank, he wished his feet were bare that he might feel the water's cooling dip. He longed to lie down with hat over eyes and dream as he had done in boyhood days. A strange weariness was over him. He had not slept the night before — had sat at his desk through each long hour writing that brief letter of a page. But when a man writes all light, all hope, out of his life, one must needs take time.

Yet it was good to be free again, to no longer fear the shadows, the eyes of men, of women, of one's own conscience. But how it made the heart cry out, the body bend to earth!

The dull ache grew to pain. The glare of the water set strange things dancing in his brain. He groped blindly for support.

"De brack dem'n come a stalkin' an' a stalkin'."

Stop! He came for the black sons of men alone. Not for the white. What had he to fear? He summoned every resource of his will and stood erect as if in defiance of its power. The effort

sent him reeling. His blood seemed of molten fire. He crawled upon his hands and knees blindly in the quest of drink.

"Accursed race!" He cried aloud and beat his head upon the boards. "Accursed to have been begot for the scorn of men, the yoke of an eternal serfdom, the darkness of the great shadow always — to the end."

They found him so, and left him on a pile of hemp to rave alone; then fled from the scene in terror of the "black demon" that stood above.

There she found him, hours later, when in answer to his note she came, her heart sore and bleeding at its confession, her face still triumphant of the memory of her love, her eyes tender with pity and grief for what he had suffered; her soul full of admiration for what he had been, the part he had played among men, the example he had set on high for others of his race to follow.

She bathed his livid brow and kneeling in the dust beside him, sought to soothe the wandering, troubled spirit that talked ever of its love of her.

And when the shadows crept into far corners of the great shed, another figure came and knelt beside him in the dumb agony of despair.

At last the zenith of his suffering was passed and with the respite reason claimed its sway. His eyes opened and she read in them an unaltered, holier love.

"I am forgiven?"

She pressed his hand and a great joy answered her from the windows of his soul.

"And you, too, forgive me — mother?"

The gray head bent above him and her tears were his full answer.

"Perhaps — beyond — the great shadow will be lifted," he whispered slowly.

The tired eyes were fixed upon the white, tender face above them. The shadows crept nearer in the gloom. He could not see. The darkness came, and light.

# The Yellow Princess.*

BY CHARLES McILVAINE.

A PAWNBROKER'S show window is a repository of sequels. The pledges exposed for sale are the residuum of depravity, crime or disaster. There is no comedy in "My Uncle's" window.

Doctor Alfred Bigelow was leisurely walking home from a visit to a charity patient. He was six feet two in height and well-proportioned. His face was refined, strong, benevolent, with merry eyes full of gentleness. He was young and well-dressed, but when he lifted his hat to the poor folks who greeted him with gladdened faces, one could see that he was bald.

Even the Doctor's leisurely steps kept those trotting who attempted to keep up with them. He was walking near a border line in the city, where small means or poverty leave off and wealth begins. He was on the lowly side. A pawnbroker's shop stood on a street corner. Ordinarily, he did not look into pawnbrokers' windows. He had no occasion to look after bargains or bric-à-brac. Such exposure of sacrifices affected him unpleasantly. A movement in the window astonished him into attention. He had thought of this window, when previously passing, as a Potter's Field for dead hopes — a burial place of last resort — where resurrection was by ticket. He stopped and looked. Large, soft, yellow eyes gazed at him. A pink mouth opened. He faintly heard a plaintive miaouw. A fluffy, long-coated Persian cat instantly responded to his interested gaze by rubbing its head against the window pane, courting the touch of a friendly hand. His hand went out and stroked consolingly against the glass. Cats know the hand inspiring to their confidence, whatever size it may be. The cat purred her pleasure. The rhythmic tremor vibrated the glass. It was a medium of sympathy. She was so lonely. But her eyes — great,

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appealing orbs, full of inquiry, — welled his tenderness to an overflow of tender touches and affectionate "Poor Pussie, Poor Pussie!"

After many minutes of demonstrative condolence he left her. He glanced back from across the street and saw her looking lovingly after him. Rebuke, surprise, regret, seemed mingled with the longing. He involuntarily lifted his hat to her, and walked rapidly homeward. The eyes haunted him. At his evening meal — choice, well served, with the elegant surroundings of his bachelor mansion — the lonely, forsaken dweller in the pawnbroker's window was present as he ate. He heard her purrs as he sipped his coffee; her rich orange coat nestled among the fruit; her glorious eyes opened upon him from the curls of his cigar smoke. The tab, hanging from her blue leather collar, swung before him tauntingly. He had not noticed the marks upon it. He did not know the price. Ever the eyes. Again and again he saw her parting gaze. They did not affect him unpleasantly. They drew him to her. He could not have said "Hiss cat" had it occurred to him. What she, refined, aristocratic, beautiful, was doing among a motley collection of cheap jewelry, watches, pistols, old clothes, gripsacks, banjoes, cornets, and hundreds of other incongruous articles, he plotted to his discontent. The most fantastic romance he could devise to account for her presence there was but a shadow to his pity. Whoever the owner might be, whatever the pinch of want that forced the parting with such a pet, did not weigh with him against the isolation of that cat from home, comfort, love.

Doctor Bigelow grew restless. He threw his half-smoked cigar into the open fire, then automatically lighted another. His calls for the day were over. Going into his office he began recording his visits. His pen stopped. The pitiful eyes looked at him from the page. "No use!" he said, closing the book. "That cat is overmastering. This is Saturday night. Poor thing. She will be locked up over Sunday." Sunday! — Two mind pictures flashed: He thought of himself in church; in the restfulness of subdued light, the peace of a worshipful presence, the inspiration of sweet music; he heard the humble prayer: — "Lord be merciful upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law." He saw the cat in a cellar, alone, disconsolate. He roused, jumped from his chair. "What

law more divine than pity — the law of humanity?" he asked himself. "Have mercy upon me, and incline my heart to keep this law." He smiled: "If that means anything, it means, get that cat."

He rang for his servant. "Stephen," he said, "I will be back in an hour. Ask Mrs. Roberts to fix a comfortable bed in my bedroom, for a cat I shall bring home in that time, and to have a good supper ready for her."

Donning his overcoat and hat he left his home, joyous over thoughts of the greeting he would get from the wistful eyes. He walked rapidly to the pawnbroker's. Two boys, street gamins, with kindly faces, were tapping on the window, and using all the seductive endearments usually addressed to cats, in vain attempts to attract the attention of the most dignified, unapproachable, totally oblivious cat that ever sat beside her tail, held her nose up, kept her eyes closed, and taught mortals their utter unworthiness of notice. So earnest were they upon coaxing recognition, that they did not notice the tall man peering over their heads, woefully disappointed that the yellow eyes were not open and waiting hopefully for him, as he confidently expected they would be. "Poor thing," he said aloud, making an apology for her neglect of him, "she is tired of people gawking at her all day. I do not wonder at it."

"She ain't tired, Mister," said one of the boys. "You ought to seed her last night when the lady came and spoke to her. You'd a thought the cat 'ud a had a fit trying to get at her. She tried to climb up the glass. It's fun. We come yere to see her do it agin — claw and step. She ain't been here yit. The ole cat ain't tired; she's a proudy, she is. She won't take no notice uv the likes uv us. You ought to see her tail when she ain't sitting on it; it's big as the stuffed fox's tail down in Mike Connor's saloon."

"No, 'taint, neither," the other boy burst in with long-held breath. "It's as big as seven common tails, with only one stem for 'em. If she had it on her head, she'd look like the feller in the the-a-tre bills that's on the fences — Prince Carni — something or other, with p'inted shoes on and his trousers blowed up, like a punkin — no legs to 'em."

"Thank you, boys, for telling me about her. What is the price

marked on her tab?" asked the Doctor, "I cannot see plainly."

"She's a twenty-fiver! Gee whizz! Old Isaacs 'ill never get twenty-five dollars for her. I kin get all the cats I want, and more too, for nothin' — slim tail cats — an' a pup throwed in. I don't see no use fer such a tail as she has, 'less it's fer her to sit on. She's a proudy."

Doctor Bigelow again said: "Thank you." Taking two tens and a five from a roll of notes, sticking the hand that held them in his pocket, he went into the shop and closed the door after him.

A middle-aged Israelite bowed politely to him and measured his social, moral, professional, financial standing at a glance. "Good efening, Doctor."

"Good evening, Sir. What is the price of that cat in your window?"

"Twenty-five dollars. Dat is a full-blooded Persian cat. You like to see it? She is a peauty. Dat cat knows a heap."

He pushed aside the curtain screening the window, and tenderly brought the cat to the counter. "Her coat is like silik, andt her tail peats a gray squir'l's. Dot cat knows a heap!"

With wide-open, inquisitorial eyes she searched the very holy of holies in Doctor Bigelow's intentions, then leaped to the counter, rubbed against his coat, purred, flourished her plume as additional salutation, and turned about in her rubbing as if on a pivot. The Doctor stroked her. She raised on her hind feet, clawed affectionately at his breast, like a child reaching for love. As he leaned down to meet her, she smoothed her head against his chin. He felt a glow of pleasure go through him. Thoughts of metempsychosis flashed through his brain — a human soul dwelt in her eyes, tender, loving, striving to mingle with his.

Old Isaacs watched the scene. He did not wait for any response from Doctor Bigelow. His voice trembled as he said:

"Doctor, you take dot cat for fifteen dollars. Dat is what I advanced on her. Dere is no per cent. Dat cat looks at me like my leetle girl. She is deadt. She puts her leetle paws up joost dot way. Dem big eyes uf hers follows me roundt de shop, andt into de house andt into my pedt. I can't do pusiness mit de peoples dot come in here. Dat cat looks at me, andt I gifs dem twice what a t'ing is wordt. Den efry night, efry night de beautiful lady dot

pawndt her comes in, andt asks me to let her kiss her pet — joost a minute. Den de tears come andt de cat go nearly crazy, andt when she goes away she says: 'Thank you, Mr. Isaacs. Please take goodt care of her. Good night,' andt her eyes stay with me more as de cat's — big, brown eyes midt tears in dem. Doctor, dis pusiness is no place for a heart. I can't do pusiness mid dem eyes looking at me — dat cat's andt dot lady's. You take her for fifteen dollar. Dis is Saturday night. I want to go to de grafe of my leetle girl tomorrow. I can't see my leetle girl's eyes if I go mit dot cat in de cellar. Dem big yellow eyes is between us."

"I will take her," said the Doctor, handing him a ten and a five from the notes in his hand. "I see on the collar that her name is 'Princess Flavia.' The owner is a cultured person, and has well named her — Flavus is yellow — The Yellow Princess. Can you tell me to whom she belonged — who pawned her?"

"Dat I cannot tell you. Maype she gif me her real name; maype not. In my pusiness we haf to keep de names to ourselfs. She is a fery beautiful lady. Andt dem eyes — dem eyes — my leetle girl's eyes was lofely. I don't see my leetle girl's eyes for dem eyes of dot lady. Please, Doctor, take dot Princess away before she comes. I can't standt it. My leetle girl is deadt. I want dem eyes to go way — leaf me my leetle girl's eyes."

The Princess Flavia sat on the Doctor's arm, with her forelegs folded inward, seemingly asleep. Her face was stolid as a sphinx. The transfer of herself as a chattel from seller to purchaser was beneath her royal consideration. She was happy. What matter to her the price placed upon her? Her confidence was not for sale at any price.

Doctor Bigelow handed his card to the pawnbroker, saying: "The lady may some time desire to know who has her pet. Please say to her that you think she can get her property at any time, by expressing a wish to have it. Good night, Mr. Isaacs. The Princess Flavia will have every kindness."

Doctor Bigelow went out on to the pavement. The lights in the windows and from the street corner lamp showed the boys waiting, eager-eyed. "I told you so, Swipes! You bought her, didn't you, Mister?"

"Yes," replied the Doctor.

"Gee whizz! A twenty-fiver. Let me touch her, won't you, Mister? I've been tryin' to touch her fer a week."

"Certainly," answered Doctor Bigelow.

Mike stroked her gently while the Doctor stooped to lower the Princess to within his reach. The boy rubbed his cheek against her soft fur. "Touch her, Swipes. You never touched a twenty-fiver. She's soft as mud. There's no stiffenin' in her." Swipes laid his face upon her, reluctantly took it away and said: "Gee!"

Mike roused the Princess with a jubilant outcry. "Here's the lady! Say, Miss, you've just come in time. The Mister's got your cat. He's bought her — fer twenty-five dollars. It didn't take him five minutes. I told him the figgers. He's a gentleman, he is! He let me stroke her."

The lady had stopped at the window. For an instant she had stood in despair. The Princess was not there. The cry of Mike startled her. She glanced at the huge man on the doorstep. Seeing the cat on his arm she stepped quickly toward him and looked up into his face. One look was enough. "Oh, Sir, have you really bought her?" she asked quietly, but with suppressed eagerness; then answered herself: "I am so glad. I know you will take good care of her. Will you please let me say good-bye to her?"

She was petite. If she had been an Amazon, armed, with lance at his throat, Doctor Bigelow would not have surrendered as quickly as he did to the trusting, pleading brown eyes, growing suspiciously moist. He stood looking down into them, dumb as an overhanging oak. The Princess answered for him. Roused by the first sound of the lady's voice, she opened her eyes, and, without a sign of regret, thankfulness, or apology, leaped from Doctor Bigelow's arm to the shoulder of her loved mistress, where she knocked her hat to one side, fluffed the ripples of the dark hair, poked her pink nose beggingly for rosy acknowledgment of her presence, and waved her tail as a triumphal banner.

Small, gloved hands went up to greet, to press the caressing head against her cheek, and then to her lips. The boys gaped. Doctor Bigelow stood mute. His big heart was close to his eyes. They dimmed. He cleared his throat nervously. Sweet, sorrowful words, low murmured, reached his ears: "Oh, my darling! Brave Princess! Lovely Princess! Dear, dear Princess. Be — be a good

cat. Good-bye." She gave the loving animal a convulsive squeeze. A sob shook her. She looked bravely into the Doctor's eyes, her own wide with grief and despair, as she handed the Princess to him.

Such eyes Doctor Bigelow had never seen — great pure depths from which pride, sorrow, love — all a woman's good — were loosened upon him. The Yellow Princess had no eyes for him. She was wildly looking backward at her mistress. He was not unmanned; but manned from head to foot with the noblest quality of man — sympathy. In a kind voice — a bit shaky — he said: "Let me fix her collar." He fussed with it an instant. "There. Now you must promise me that you will never part with the Yellow Princess again."

"How can I promise that?" she asked, half smiling. "She is not mine."

"Yes, she is. Her love is yours. I did not buy it. Take it. Keep it. I hope you will be happy with her. Good night." A few long strides took Doctor Bigelow out of her sight. But the eyes — her eyes were before him. They went home with him, lived in the softest glow of his wood fire as he sat at its front. When his collie, as was his wont, thrust his nose under his hand for a caress, the Doctor watched the fire dreamily and forgot to give the accustomed pat.

The petite lady he had left so abruptly stood astonished, dazed. The Princess nestled in her arms, and closed her eyes in contentment.

"Gee! Swipes. He gave her to her — a twenty-fiver. He's a gentleman, he is, Miss, he gave her to you. You kin pawn her ag'in!"

Her face flushed at the insinuation. "Never!" she exclaimed. With the cat on her arm she entered the pawn shop. Old Isaacs showed his astonishment. "Good efening, Miss."

"Good evening, Mr. Isaacs. I came in to thank you again for your kindness to me — letting me speak to my pet every evening these many months. And, Mr. Isaacs, can you tell me who that gentleman is who bought her? He gave her to me and ran off. He did not give me time to thank him. I will never part with her again, Mr. Isaacs."